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UNCLAS VILNIUS 000514

SIPDIS

STATE PASS TO EUR/NB AND EUR/PPD (JLOCKARD)

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TAGS: [OIIP](#) [PREL](#) [SCUL](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#)

SUBJECT: USNATO AND USEU 2005 TOUR FOR LITHUANIAN
PARLIAMENTARIANS

1. Description of Activity: Four Lithuanian Parliamentarians from committees that play decision-making roles in Lithuania's foreign and security policy participated in a NATO and USEU tour. The group visited USNATO, SHAPE, and USEU headquarters in Brussels. Political officer Alexander Titolo and media specialist Andra Litevkaite coordinated the tour with USNATO and escorted the group.

2. Dates: April 26-28 2005

3. Justification and Objective: Ensuring public and parliamentary support for Lithuania's NATO membership, defense spending, and active participation in NATO is a mission priority and part of our strategy for ensuring regional stability. Parliament plays an essential role in achieving these objectives, and parliamentary approval of budget allocations is a sine qua non for Lithuanian participation in international operations and other security/defense initiatives. The tour aimed to deepen the understanding of these leading parliamentarians (some new to the job) regarding NATO activities. We included USEU in the tour to provide the lawmakers an idea of the extensive cooperation between the USG and the EU on a wide range of issues.

4. Audience: Vaclov Stankevic -- Chair of the NATO Commission and Member of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Audronius Azubalis -- Deputy Chair of the Committee on Foreign Affairs and Member of the Committee on European Affairs, Roma Zakaitiene -- Member of the Committee on European Affairs and Member of the NATO Commission, Algimantas Matulevicius -- Member of the Committee on National Security and Defense and Member of the Commission on Anticorruption.

5. Result/Impact: The participants remarked on several occasions that the information they received on the trip will be extremely useful to them and that they will share what they learned with their Parliament colleagues. We chose these particular participants because they have direct impact on foreign and security policy, but did not have (with the exception of Stankevic) sufficient exposure to NATO planning structures and working level experts to equip them as leaders on these issues within their government. We can measure the success of the tour by the participants' significantly increased command of these subjects and their gratitude to the USG for helping them acquire it.

-- Discussions at USNATO and SHAPE regarding the ISAF mission and the role of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) were extremely timely, as Lithuania is now in the process of deploying its own PRT to Ghowr Province. Because this is the first time Lithuania has undertaken such a mission, the Parliamentarians were eager to broaden their knowledge of the work done by ISAF. They were also keen to learn from SHAPE officials about Afghanistan and to draw lessons that may be useful in supporting the Lithuanian PRT.

-- Discussions at USEU exceeded the participants' expectations. They had been unaware of the scope and depth of U.S.-EU cooperation and the perceptiveness of U.S. officials about EU affairs.

-- Future expansion and transformation of NATO were recurring themes throughout the schedule, and the participants were very interested in discussions regarding NATO-Ukraine relations and NATO members' plans to balance contributions to the NATO Response Force (NRF) with contributions to the EU's planned Battle Groups.

6. Quality of Support: Excellent logistical support and program organization on the part of USNATO and USEU ensured that the trip proceeded smoothly. The participants were very comfortable throughout the activities. The working lunches hosted by USNATO Public Affairs, SHAPE and USEU were valuable opportunities for informal discussions. All speakers were engaging, informative and knowledgeable on issues of particular importance to Lithuania. Special thanks go to Thomas White and Kamana Romero. Their patience, flexibility and excellent organizational skills made for a program that helped enlighten MPs who must support the GOL as it continues to make substantial contributions to the development of democracy in Iraq and Afghanistan.

